

Texas Historical Commission staff (WAM), 2/6/2014
27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Galveston County (Job #14GV08) Subject AA, Civil War (Atlas) UTM
Location: Galveston, 2201 Strand Street

JUNETEENTH

COMMEMORATED ANNUALLY ON JUNE 19TH, JUNETEENTH IS THE OLDEST KNOWN CELEBRATION OF THE END OF SLAVERY IN THE U.S. THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, ISSUED BY PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON SEP. 22, 1862, ANNOUNCED, "THAT ON THE 1ST DAY OF JANUARY, A.D. 1863, ALL PERSONS HELD AS SLAVES WITHIN ANY STATE...IN REBELLION AGAINST THE U.S. SHALL BE THEN, THENCEFORWARD AND FOREVER FREE." HOWEVER, IT WOULD TAKE THE CIVIL WAR AND PASSAGE OF THE 13TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION TO END THE BRUTAL INSTITUTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SLAVERY.

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR ENDED IN APRIL 1865 MOST SLAVES IN TEXAS WERE STILL UNAWARE OF THEIR FREEDOM. THIS BEGAN TO CHANGE WHEN UNION TROOPS ARRIVED IN GALVESTON. MAJ. GEN. GORDON GRANGER, COMMANDING OFFICER, DISTRICT OF TEXAS, FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS IN THE OSTERMAN BUILDING (STRAND AND 22ND ST.), READ 'GENERAL ORDER NO. 3' ON JUNE 19, 1865. THE ORDER STATED "THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS ARE INFORMED THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PROCLAMATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES, ALL SLAVES ARE FREE. THIS INVOLVES AN ABSOLUTE EQUALITY OF PERSONAL RIGHTS AND RIGHTS OF PROPERTY BETWEEN FORMER MASTERS AND SLAVES." WITH THIS NOTICE, RECONSTRUCTION ERA TEXAS BEGAN.

FREED AFRICAN AMERICANS OBSERVED "EMANCIPATION DAY," AS IT WAS FIRST KNOWN, AS EARLY AS 1866 IN GALVESTON. AS COMMUNITY GATHERINGS GREW ACROSS TEXAS, CELEBRATIONS INCLUDED PARADES, PRAYER, SINGING, AND READINGS OF THE PROCLAMATION. IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY, COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS GAVE WAY TO MORE PRIVATE COMMEMORATIONS. A RE-EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC OBSERVANCE HELPED JUNETEENTH BECOME A STATE HOLIDAY IN 1979. INITIALLY OBSERVED IN TEXAS, THIS LANDMARK EVENT'S LEGACY IS EVIDENT TODAY BY WORLDWIDE COMMEMORATIONS THAT CELEBRATE FREEDOM AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT.

(2014)

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS